

February 27, 2023

Appropriations Committee

**H.B. No. 6659 AN ACT CONCERNING THE STATE BUDGET FOR THE BIENNIUM ENDING JUNE 30, 2025, AND MAKING APPROPRIATIONS THEREFOR.**

Elyssa Rothe  
61 Cranbury Road  
Norwalk, CT 06851

Senator Hartley, Representative Gibson, and Connecticut General Assembly members of the Appropriations Committee. My name is Elyssa Rothe and I am a resident of Norwalk, Connecticut, as well as a member of the New CT Farmers Alliance. Today, I am writing on the proposed budget for fiscal years 2024 and 2025, concerning the Department of Agriculture. I respectfully ask for your support in funding the CT Grown for CT Kids Grants Program with an appropriation of 1 million dollars annually.

Incentivizing local procurement for school meals by providing additional funding to support the purchase of locally grown foods will provide benefits to the children, farmers, and the local economy of our state.

CT's local economy will thrive from this allocation, as the dollars will be reinvested into the farming businesses in our communities. Buying produce from local farmers keeps our money close to home. Let's work to build the economy in our communities instead of a corporation in another state or country. Since the produce travels through fewer hands, more of the money spent actually gets back to those who grew it.

Children who have balanced diets that include healthy fruits, vegetables, and other nutrient dense foods perform better at school and thrive in and out of the classroom. One of the best ways to encourage children to eat these types of foods is to ensure they are fresh and delicious. Locally sourced food is riper, more nutrient dense, and tastier than foods that are prematurely harvested and shipped across far distances to reach our plates. Nobody wants to bite into a tasteless tomato from Mexico or a mealy apple from Washington. To encourage our kids to eat healthy foods, procuring that food locally boosts taste and increases the chances kids develop healthy eating habits.

Farmers benefit from local procurement as it drives revenue to farms and builds relationships between farmers and local buyers. Purchasing from local farmers and keeping farms in business allows farmers to maintain and preserve the green space and farmland in our communities. Buying locally grown produce also allows farmers to develop relationships with local buyers, rather than buyers turning to corporate supermarkets and out-of-state sellers.

I urge you to support this funding for this program - it's a win-win investment for our youth, farms, and economic health. Thank you for your time and service.

Sincerely,

Elyssa Rothe  
Norwalk, CT